

LOOKING FOR HELP?

The section below is brought to you by Donna Culbert, Director of Health for the Newtown Health District, with ALOT of help from many individuals.

To Begin with.....

There are many, many qualified, dedicated, caring and truly committed individuals that have been working to help our community. They have been doing arduous work, with gentle, tender, patient care.

Not all people need therapy or will seek it. And not all people need therapy at a particular given time. There are a lot of different ways that people find comfort, resolution, peace. There is no "One Size Fits All" for therapy and healing.

Newtown has a variety of opportunities to heal and grow, whether it be in the community members and activities that take place across the town, the houses of worship where many come together in faith, in the quiet beauty of the outdoors that connects us to the greater universe and especially at the dinner table where family can see and feel into the faces and hearts of each other.

Just like the variety of venues have different appeal for different folks, so is the search for mental health. ***At this time, we offer you information about the search for therapy and about different interventions that have been implemented to serve our community.***

Consider therapy if...

- You feel an overwhelming and prolonged sense of helplessness and sadness, and your problems do not seem to get better despite your efforts and help from family and friends.
- You are finding it difficult to carry out everyday activities: for example, you are unable to concentrate on assignments at work, and your job performance is suffering as a result.
- You worry excessively, expect the worst or are constantly on edge.
- Your actions are harmful to yourself or to others: for instance, you are drinking too much alcohol, abusing drugs or becoming overly argumentative and aggressive.

Consider mental health services for your child if you notice...

- developmental delay in speech, language, or toilet training
- learning or attention problems (such as ADHD)
- behavioral problems (such as excessive anger, acting out, bedwetting or eating disorders)
- a significant drop in grades, particularly if your child normally maintains high grades
- episodes of sadness, tearfulness, or depression
- social withdrawal or isolation
- being the victim of bullying or bullying other children

- decreased interest in previously enjoyed activities
- overly aggressive behavior (such as biting, kicking, or hitting)
- sudden changes in appetite (particularly in adolescents)
- insomnia or increased sleepiness
- excessive school absenteeism or tardiness
- mood swings (e.g., happy one minute, upset the next)
- development of or an increase in physical complaints (such as headache, stomachache, or not feeling well) despite a normal physical exam by your doctor
- signs of alcohol, drug, or other substance use (such as solvents or prescription drug abuse)
- problems in transitions (following separation, divorce, or relocation)

How do I find a mental health professional?

To find help, ask your physician or another health professional. Ask family and friends. Contact your area community mental health center. Inquire at your church or synagogue.

Many people find the difference between the types of mental health professionals confusing, especially when they are looking for help. There are psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, counselors, therapist and nurses, all of whom have varied levels of training and experience with treatment of different types of problems, including trauma. And if you consider the multiple approaches to treatment, ranging from counseling to various forms of psychotherapy and medication, the whole mental health system begins to look like a maze that's nearly impossible to navigate. Here is some information which may help you decide what type of mental health professional is right for you.

Psychiatrist. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor (M.D.) who specializes in preventing, diagnosing, and treating mental illness. As a doctor, a psychiatrist is licensed to write prescriptions. If you are working with a psychiatrist, a lot of the treatment may be focused on medication management.

Psychologist. A psychologist has a doctoral degree (PhD, PsyD, or EdD) in psychology, which is the study of the mind and behaviors. Training provides a psychologist an education in evaluating and treating mental and emotional disorders. Licensed psychologists are qualified to do counseling and psychotherapy and provide treatment and evaluation for mental disorders.

Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT), Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW). LPCs, LMFTs, and LCSWs are mental health professionals who have a master's degree (MA) in psychology, counseling, social work or a related field. In order to be licensed, the mental health professional also needs additional experience working with a qualified mental health professional after graduate school. These mental health professionals are qualified to evaluate and treat mental problems by providing counseling or psychotherapy.

Psychiatric or Mental Health Nurse (APRN). Some nurses have had special training in providing mental health services (APRN). Depending on their level of training and certification, they can evaluate patients

for mental illness and provide treatment in the form of psychotherapy. In Connecticut, they are also licensed to prescribe and monitor medications.

What to consider when making the choice

Therapists and clients work together. The right match is important. Most mental health professionals agree that an important factor in determining whether or not to work with a particular provider, once that provider's credentials and competence are established, is your level of personal comfort with that person. A good rapport with your provider is critical. Choose a one with whom you feel comfortable and at ease.

Finding the right mental health professional and the right approach to therapy is as important as finding the right medical doctor. Whether you are planning to see a psychologist or a psychiatrist or another type of mental health professional, you should start with a phone call to the professional. Ask about the professional's approach to dealing with mental issues and how he or she generally works with clients. Ask about whether or not he or she accepts insurance and how payments are handled. You might describe your reason for wanting to make an appointment and ask if he or she is experienced in dealing with such issues. If you are comfortable talking with him or her, the next step is to make an appointment.

At your first office visit, the mental health professional will want to talk with you about why you think you need to come to therapy. He or she will want to know about what your symptoms are, how long you've had them and what, if anything, you've done about them in the past. He or she will probably ask you about your family and your work as well as what you do to relax. This initial conversation is important in developing the appropriate approach to treatment. Before you leave the office, the mental health professional should describe to you the plan for treatment and give you an opportunity to ask any questions you might have.

It will likely take several weeks before you become fully comfortable with your therapy. If you still aren't feeling comfortable after two or three visits, let the mental health professional know and explain why you feel that way. The two of you need to work together as a team in order to get the most out of your treatment.

Disclaimer: Finding a therapist, social worker, or counselor who is right for you is important. You can identify potential candidates through your health care provider, religious advisor, friends/family or other trusted professional.

What does that alphabet soup mean? Tf-CBT, CPT, EMDR,

The letters included in the "Specialized Training" Column of the list refer to specific types of trauma interventions which require training, but they are not training in the general sense of a therapist's overall training. They are included here to assist a viewer if they are interested in trauma training. There are many, many types of helpful and valuable therapy; not all are described here.

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As stated in the section *Thinking About Therapy?*, one of the most important parts of therapy is the connection between the client and the provider. There are lots of different types of therapy, just like there are lots of different types of people.

Descriptions of some of the different types of trauma training are included below.

Trauma Focused – Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Tf-CBT): Tf-CBT is a structured treatment approach for children ages 3-18 who are experiencing significant emotional and behavioral difficulties related to traumatic life events. Children and parents learn new skills to help process thoughts and feelings related to traumatic life events; manage and resolve distressing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related traumatic life events; and enhance safety, growth, parenting skills, and family communication.

Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT): CPT works by giving you a new way to handle distressing thoughts about traumatic events and to gain an understanding of these events and how it has changed the way you look at the world, yourself, and others. You will learn about your PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) symptoms, become more aware of your thoughts and feelings, learn skills to help question or challenge your thoughts, and learn about how your beliefs about safety, trust, control, self-esteem, other people, and relationships can change after trauma.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR): EMDR is treatment which identifies and addresses experiences that have overwhelmed the brain's natural resilience or coping capacity, and have thereby created traumatic symptoms and/or harmful coping strategies. Through EMDR therapy, people are able to reprocess traumatic information until it is no longer psychologically disruptive. During this procedure, patients tend to "process" the memory in a way that leads to a peaceful resolution. This often results in increased insight regarding both previously disturbing events and long held negative thoughts about the self. EMDR integrates many of the successful elements of a range of therapeutic approaches, yet there are aspects of EMDR are unique: In particular, the therapist leads a patient in a series of lateral eye movements while the patient simultaneously focuses on various aspects of a disturbing memory. The left – right eye movements in EMDR are a form of "bilateral stimulation." Other forms of bilateral stimulation used by EMDR therapists include alternating bilateral sound using headphones and alternating tactile simulation using a handheld device that vibrates or taps to the back of the patient's hands.